

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-28 (Cancelled).

Claim 29 (Currently Amended): A shaft including a shank comprising:

a large diameter portion;

a splined portion engaged with a fitting member, said splined portion including a plurality of splines and a plurality of grooves which diametrically converge at a position spaced from the large diameter portion in the axial direction of the shaft;

a tapered portion which stops the fitting member and which is located adjacent the large diameter portion, wherein the tapered portion which stops the fitting member includes a curved transitional portion contiguous therewith and reduces the diameter of the shank in the space between the splined portion and the large diameter portion to a minimum diameter at the transitional portion which is greater than that of the splined portion at the position where the plurality of splines and the plurality of grooves diametrically converge; and

a further portion adjacent the position where the plurality of splines and the plurality of grooves diametrically converge in the space between the splined portion and the tapered portion, wherein the further portion reduces the diameter of the shank from that of the minimum diameter of the transitional portion of the tapered portion which stops the fitting member to that of the splined portion at the position where the plurality of splines and the plurality of grooves diametrically converge, ~~and wherein the further portion comprises at least two curved portions.~~

Claim 30 (New): A shaft including a shank comprising:

a large diameter portion;

a splined portion engaged with a fitting member, said splined portion including a plurality of splines and a plurality of grooves which diametrically converge at a position spaced from the large diameter portion in the axial direction of the shaft;

a tapered portion which stops the fitting member and which is located adjacent the large diameter portion, wherein the tapered portion which stops the fitting member includes a curved transitional portion contiguous therewith and reduces the diameter of the shank in the space between the splined portion and the large diameter portion to a minimum diameter at the transitional portion which is greater than that of the splined portion at the position where the plurality of splines and the plurality of grooves diametrically converge; and

a further portion in the space between the splined portion and the portion which stops the fitting member, wherein the further portion is separated from the curved transitional portion by at least a change in slope and reduces the diameter of the shank from that of the minimum diameter of the transitional portion of the tapered portion which stops the fitting member to that of the splined portion at the position where the plurality of splines and the plurality of grooves diametrically converge.